FROM GILD TO FACTORY

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A FIRST SHORT COURSE OF ECONOMIC HISTORY

BY

ALFRED MILNES, M.A. (LOND.)

EDITOR OF "JOHNSON'S SELECT WORKS," "BUTLER'S HUDIBRAS," "PROBLEMS AND EXERCISES IN POLITICAL ECONOMY," ETC.

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INTRODUCTION

THE following pages contain the substance of a short course of University Extension Lectures. Confined within such close limits of space, it is obvious that the aim of speaker or of writer must also be restricted. And the aim here has been rather to kindle interest than dogmatically to instruct—rather to persuade to read much than to offer a substitute for much reading. The author has had frequent occasion to notice how a certain type of mind, by no means uncommon amongst the young, is repelled from historical reading as being dull, and in a sense arbitrary. And this feeling he has believed to be traceable to an inarticulate repugnance to what is felt to be the isolation of each historical fact. Occurrences which do not hang together might as well be separated by five hundred years as by five; and the personages in history who do not hang together are like the puppets in a Punch and Judy show, who deserve to be, and generally are, hanged separately. To learn by heart a list of battles and their dates can only be accepted as an unavoidable consequence of original sin. But once let human sympathy provide the thread, and the beads will be strung. Once persuade Simon de Montfort to *live* again for us, and the triumph of Lewes and the fatal ruin of Evesham are no longer hard to remember.

Now the first step towards supplying this natural craving for intellectual sympathy seems to be taken when the *reasonableness* of history is insisted

on. And if this be so, then our First Book in any branch of historical study must be not an "Outline" containing a list of facts, all alleged to have "happened," and between no two whereof is any connection stated, but rather the driving of a shaft of reasoned cause and effect through the matter with which we have to deal.

The following pages attempt to drive such a shaft—a very slender one—through the mass of our economic history. By its purpose such work must be judged. Far from being intended as in any way a substitute for the study of such works as those enumerated in the "List of Authors," these pages will have failed of their purpose if they do not incite a few more students to the study of those very works. Therefore it becomes needless to say how the author is indebted to each and all of them. This little book is founded on those works, and contains little or nothing that cannot be read in further detail in some one or more of them, and nothing at all save what the author earnestly hopes may be so studied.

In preparing the Second Edition the opportunity has been taken to comply with the suggestions of experience in using the book for teaching purposes, and certain omissions have been supplied and some corrections made; whilst in one important respect—Trade Union Law—the narrative has been continued to include more recent legislation.

A. M.

HAMPSTEAD,
September 1910.

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FROM GILD TO FACTORY

I

THE MAKING OF ENGLAND

THE first question about Economic History is "How do we Know?" In England we have a wealth of records, more so than any other people. This is variously true for different periods in our country's story, but abundantly true of quite early times. The greatest of all these records is *Domesday Book*, completed in 1089; a register of landowners and tenants for all England, except the four northern counties and part of Lancashire. To compile it commissioners were sent into each county, and "a jury empanelled in each Hundred declared on oath the extent and nature of each estate, the names, numbers, and condition of its inhabitants, its value before and after the Conquest, and the sums due from it to the Crown." For early history we have other sources of information in documents such as Charters, Leases, and Accounts. Monuments and Relics furnish valuable testimony, actual Histories not so valuable. Survivals of customs and institutions give indication of their original form, and the preambles of

statutes recite the circumstances which called for their enactment. From *Domesday* there follows a period of comparative silence in the records, some two centuries long. Then, under Henry III, we find the king's great audit imitated in the accounts of the Manors, and these have been preserved, possibly as evidence of title. Royal proclamations and statutes actually passed are of the greatest value. But our forefathers had a history before they inhabited our present land at all, and for that our authorities must be the classical historians, Cæsar and Tacitus.

For some years before he landed in our island in 55 B.C., Cæsar had been in contact with our forefathers in their original home in North Germany.[1] As he describes them, they were just emerging from nomadism. They hunted and they fought, but they hardly ever dug, and they moved too often to care to build permanently anywhere. There was no such thing in those days as taking a man's fixtures at a valuation. Such tillage as they had was *extensive* in the old sense, that is to say, they cleared the land, took a single crop from it, and then let it grow wild again, whilst they moved on elsewhere to repeat the process. This process, when land is abundant and population small, is by no means so absurd as it sounds. For it enables full advantage to be taken of natural fertility. In some places, such as parts of Russia

[1] Geotas or Jutes, from Jutland
Englas, from Sleswick and Holstein
Saxons, from Lower Weser and Elbe
Frisians, from Lower Ems and Rhine
} were the peoples who became the conquering invaders of Britain.

and of India, it is still in use, generally in combination with other methods. And some crops, *e. g.* tobacco, can be brought to perfection in no other way, for the restoration of the land by manure spoils the crop.

The nomad cannot *accumulate* wealth. Settlement brings both accumulation and variety of wealth, whence follow exchange and trade. Early settlements were probably village communities as sketched by Tacitus. Says that historian : [1] "Land proportioned to the number of inhabitants is occupied by the whole community in turn, and afterwards divided among them according to rank. A wide expanse of plains makes the partition easy. They till fresh fields every year, and they have still more land than enough." Each man probably received his share of the land for one year only, and a share in the hay crop.

When they settled it was without any definite method; wherein they present an entire contrast to the Roman. Though the possessions of a Teuton villager were small, his rights were considerable.

He had—

> A house. A strip in the fields. Part of the meadow which yielded hay. Pasturage for cattle on the meadow in the common waste, and fuel from the same source.

Hence a prosperous village would mean one with

[1] Agri, pro numero cultorum, ab universis in vices occupantur; quos mox inter se secundum dignationem partiuntur; facilitatem partiendi camporum spatia praestant; arva per annos mutant, et superest ager.—*Germania*, 26.

plenty of "waste." Portions of this waste were used each year for tillage and meadow; and when there was plenty of it, it had time to fully recover before being again called on to bear crops.

When intensive tillage comes, men prefer to retain the same land. This is a veritable industrial revolution, even more far-reaching in its result than that which occupied the closing years of the eighteenth century and the early portion of the nineteenth. But its date is quite uncertain; we do not even know whether it was before or after the English invaded Britain; but probably it was after.

These communities were bound together by ties of blood, neighbourliness, or comradeship in war. Sometimes, too, such a community may have been constituted out of a group conquered by the invaders. Whichever way it was formed the village community is a world-wide institution. Some kind of administration it must have had, and this was probably entrusted, year by year, by the assembled householders, to the headmanship of some one individual. The headmanship was rarely hereditary.

These Teuton invaders brought with them industrial arts of some development, especially on the military side. They had ships and wheeled vehicles; their swords were good, and they were acquainted with coinage. They were pirates when they dared, and traders when they dared not, which, to do them justice, was not often. A prolific race they were, as all people emerging from nomadism are; and they often migrated. And

when they came to Britain they brought with them—

A Land System, based on villages of the German type, *i.e.* clusters of houses rather than solitary homesteads.

A Tribal System, wherein chiefs rule over freemen, who possess thralls.

The England these Tribes invaded.—Nations follow the sun. His light first shows us our island not an island at all, but the centre of a promontory inhabited by cave men who had to dispute the right of abode with the cave tiger and the mammoth, and when victorious etched the likeness of their victim on his tooth or tusk. Then an island, practically the same as we now know it, with long-headed, short-legged inhabitants, non-Aryan aborigines. These knew nothing of metals, but they chipped the flint. Then the tall, round-headed, tomb-building Briton, who brought us bronze, and began our history, and (possibly) left us Stonehenge.

Then the Iron Age which Cæsar found here, the age which buried its dead with a complete kit of tools laid ready to the warrior's hand, and by the side of "One, sir, that was a woman, but, rest her soul, she's dead," glass beads, that beauty might go beautifully through the portals of the world to come. Rude and rough doubtless, but an offering to be respected, being in fact some of the earliest of the flowers of immortal hope that human love has planted beside the pathway of human sorrow. Some primitive coinage the coast Britons seem to

have known from times long before the Roman Conquest, but the ruder Silurians of the interior and the west probably knew nothing of it.

To them enter Cæsar, 55 B.C. He regarded them much as Mr. Kipling does Fuzzy Wuzzy.[1] And the only real result of his expedition was an increase of trade and communication with Gaul.

But when Aulus Plautius came in A.D. 43 the results were great and lasting. There were fifty-six cities in Roman Britain, and the civilization was high. The organization was of Roman type, politically and socially. In matters of theology the change was no less complete. The Druids vanished, and Roman paganism found imitators of its images in British artists, who seem to have been formed into Collegia or Gilds, the rudimentary forms of those Gilds with which we shall have to do.

Their *Industries* as we now know them, with a knowledge gathered to some extent from the remains of their work, comprised mosaic paving (*Museacum*); glass, chiefly in the form of beads; pottery, iron, bronze, and gold. Coins they had from early Roman times, a large proportion of those now surviving being of the Mint of London, which was established under Constantine (323–337).

In 330 B.C. Pytheas explored Britain from the Greek colony of Marseilles. He noted the wheat harvest, and the large barns in which the corn was threshed, and he tasted mead made from wheat and honey, but he did not venture inland. About

[1] "A pore benighted heathen, but a fust-class fightin' man."

two hundred and fifty years later, Posidonius, the tutor of Cicero, came and explored the interior and the west, where he saw the tin mines. Iron was worked in the valley of the Severn before the Romans came, when the west was the principal home of the handicrafts. Britain had domesticated most of the animals that have been domesticated at all by the time when authentic history begins. One mythical king went to heaven and stole bees; another went and stole swine, but not from heaven. In Cæsar's time the exports were wheat, barley, hounds, and possibly slaves, the imports being manufactured articles of iron and bronze, pottery, salt, and cloth. Ships they had for trade and war, with sails of hide. Lud, the god of commerce, was worshipped on the banks of the Severn and the Thames, at Lydney and on Ludgate Hill.[1] Metals in rude form were exported; lead in "pigs," each bearing a date. Coal was burnt, and fabrics were woven. Beavers, wolves, bears, and red deer were amongst the wild animals found in the country. The houses were sometimes of brick, the roofs of slate; and beer was brewed and drunk. Over the whole country there was profound peace. No Roman villa whose remains have yet been discovered shows any trace of having been fortified. The nature of the British social life and manners is best gathered from the old Welsh poems and romances. There was a tribal unity of freemen, who possessed the conquered villeins as serfs.

[1] That Lud also sometimes appears as God of War may be taken as an early version of the theory that "trade follows the flag."

We can trace totem-kinship in the fact that the mythical ancestor of the tribe often bore the name of an animal. The king was absolute. The chief wealth of the tribe was cattle, horses, sheep, and swine. Value was expressed in kine. Salt was of great importance, as it supplied the winter meat. The furniture of the homes was very scanty, but the ladies led the way in luxury and fashion by the possession of combs and scissors.

But the Roman power fell. The Picts and Scots made inroads in the north, and the yet more formidable English in the south-east. Against these Rome arranged a defence, whose organization we know from the *Notitia Dignitatum* (about A.D. 405). The whole island was under a *Vicarius Britanniarum*. For the army there was a *Dux Britanniae,* commanding some thirty-seven regiments along Hadrian's Wall; a *Comes Litoris Saxonici* for the defence of the south-east coast, and a *Comes Britanniarum*, who commanded the field army in general. But all came to an end in 410, when the Roman forces were finally withdrawn, and the Britons left to cope by themselves with the invading forces. But under the civilizing Roman rule the right hand of the British Fuzzy Wuzzy had largely lost its cunning. For the Roman rule in Britain contrasts with English rule in Egypt, in that it was deliberately enervating, and intended to deprive the people of the capacity for self-defence. The testimony of Tacitus on this point is at once clear and striking. "Little by little," he says, "they were led away towards the allurements of vice—lounges and baths and the elegancies of convivial banquets.

Thus is that called amongst the ignorant by the name of civilization which is really but a characteristic of servitude." [1]

So the British-Romanic civilization went down before the barbaric fire and sword of the Saxon. These got their first entry in the usual way. Vortigern, the British king, unable himself to repel the Picts and Scots, called in the mercenary aid of the Geotas (Jutes) under Hengist and Horsa, who turned their arms against their employer, and by 457 the Britons were fleeing from them as from fire.

There came a rally at the end of the fifth century, the time of the legends—

> "Dull days were those, till our good Arthur broke
> The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill";

but this was vain, and civilized Britain became savage England.

Thus then came the English—Saxons, Angles, and Jutes—to such an England as described. Wave after wave of them poured in. The Battle of Deorham, 577, which opened up the valley of the Severn to the invaders, was the really decisive one. But the struggle dragged on for a century, and when it was over we had to start afresh with an uncivilized England.

The invaders laid out the conquered land as their own had been laid out at home. Each man had his house, his yard, and his share of land, his right to hay and pasture. These may at first

[1] Tacitus, *Agricola*, c. 21.

have formed groups of agricultural *freemen*,[1] though this seems hardly likely, and it is certain that by the time of *Domesday* they were hamlets of servile dependents.

Then for about 400 years from Deorham (577) our history practically consists of the story of the consolidation of England into one kingdom (Egbert, 958–975). Christianity is introduced, and communities of monks grow up under the patronage of the kings. There was but little trade, salt being one of the earliest articles of commerce. Extensive was gradually giving way to intensive cultivation. Fallows were kept on the three-fields system, or sometimes on the two-fields system. The groups thus formed were self-sufficing, each member thereof doing what there was to do without individual payment. The tillage was "combined"—men contributing their oxen to make up the team of eight for the plough, etc. Of commerce there is hardly any. By 900 Alfred has built ships, but he has had to get foreign sailors to man them. Ethelred drew up a code of dues for London trade, which point to considerable commerce with north-west Europe, the imports being manufactured goods, and the exports raw produce and slaves.

Towns.—The English had wiped out the Roman towns, and had substituted none of their own until Alfred and his daughter Æthelflœd of Mercia built and walled-in some forty or fifty boroughs. London had been utterly devastated when first the English came, and it was not until about 700 that it became

[1] On the great "Bond or Free" controversy, see Cunningham, pp. 107–114, and Ashley, i. p. 5.

a city, described as "the mart of many traders." It was for long a very *foreign* city; often the brains but never the heart of mediæval England. Towns on rivers like Bristol and Exeter owed their importance to their river-trade and their fisheries. But all the eighty towns in *Domesday* taken together would hardly yield a population of 200,000. These boroughs were simply enlarged townships, with arable, pasture, and common wood, and their men were the serfs of a neighbouring lord. Next in importance to agriculture and fishing came the production of salt, whose great importance has been already mentioned. Embroidery and weaving were fairly well advanced, and the greater monasteries had their own artificers. Markets and fairs were frequent, but were cumbered with tolls and dues. It was law that all transactions of twenty pence value and over must be done in a borough, and the trade of the borough was regulated by its gilds.

There is a great mystery about Anglo-Saxon agricultural life, as to the origin of the manor. Some hold that the "mark" system never was English in its entirety—that equality had passed away and property in land had become individual before the system arrived here at all; that weak landholders naturally depend on strong ones, whence Feudalism developed as a natural growth, so that the free early Saxon *ceorl* becomes the villan of the Norman law. And hence that the English manor begins its history as a group of serfs. Be the origin what it may, the form of the manor as we shall find it was pretty firmly established by the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066.

And thus England passed 600 years with little definite to show for each year that passed. Yet at the end of that time it was a *united Christian* country, with a vigorous *town life*, and *organized trade*, and some commencement of *central government*.

But meantime there has been another graft upon the English stock. The *Danes* have come. These Danes and Norsemen were a virile race. They traded with the East *viâ* the Caspian and the Black Seas. They made Gothland (Wisby) the centre of an *Arabian* trade. They colonized Iceland and even Greenland, and without doubt discovered America. In England, the districts in which they settled have ever since been in the forefront of industrial enterprise. They held traffic in honour; and by their custom one who had thrice fared over the wide sea by his own means was to be "of thane-right worthy." And they did a good deal to add to the number and influence of our towns. Towns, as centres of trade, had indeed been growing—sometimes around the monasteries and shrines where lay the sainted dead, sometimes at the stopping-places of the pilgrims to those shrines, sometimes by the coalescence of villages; and some towns developed from the forts and strong places set up either by the Danes to enable them to keep what they had won, or by Alfred and Æthelflœd, to prevent their winning more.

And all this while the idea of PROPERTY has been slowly developing in the minds of those who were to make our nation. Man only desires permanent possession in the case of things "useful" to him. Hence the nomad does not appropriate Land.

Ownership of land comes with *intensive* cultivation; and it is respected as a "fact of rationality" —one rational being naturally responding to the manifestation of a rational purpose by another rational being. So that property in land commences where nomadism ends. And by the time when *Domesday Book* comes to be compiled (1089), the proprietary rights of every portion of English soil were as real, even if not so definite, as now.

And property was of as much social importance then as now. A man's whole status depended on the amount of his property; his duties as well as his rights, and all his liabilities to the community as a whole. Taxation there was—

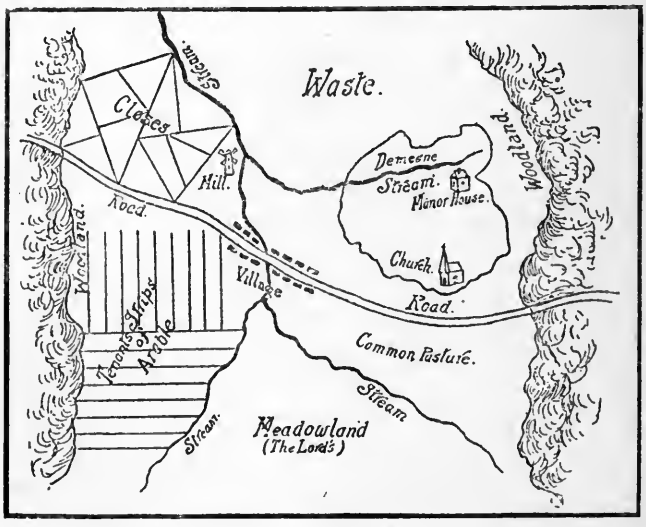
(*a*) In the form of service, the *trinoda necessitas*, to help in making and maintaining (1) war, (2) roads and bridges, (3) fortifications;
(*b*) Tithe for the Church;
(*c*) Danegeld, the earliest money tax in the strict sense.

Of these (*a*) was naturally fitted for commutation into money payment, and some traces exist of such commutation as early as the Confessor.

And thus, possessing property, man soon contrives to enhance its suitability to his wants by means of EXCHANGE. Primitive exchange must have been by *barter*, wherein the best of the bargain goes to the man least anxious to trade, and the limitations are set by the estimate of value in use. From its obvious difficulties arises a *money*, in the course of whose growth it is remarkable that the estimation of a debt in terms of money had

become common while actual payment in money was still rare. The imposition of the tax Danegeld points to money having by that time become fairly general. And connected with money and its subdivisions we find a *metric system*, with units of length, area, capacity, and weight.

Thus then lived the folk who dwelt in England in *Manors* or *Marks*. The Manor and the Mark differed *inter se* in respect of ultimate ownership. If the land were owned in common by a group of *freemen* it would be described as held under the *Mark* system. If the land was the property of a lord, it was a *Manor*. Beginning with the eleventh century, because by that time the great "bond or free" controversy can be discounted, we find England dotted all over with Manors, which looked something like this—



From woodland to woodland a *road* passes and crosses a stream. Water + locomotion = village, and round it the land is systematically divided. Now, if this land were owned in common by a group of freemen, it would be a *Mark;* but if, as indicated in our diagram, it were owned by a *Lord* living in a *Manor House* on a *Demesne*, it was a *Manor*. Of this land, a part was held by tenants of the lord, and this was called land in *Villenage;* and, as one condition of the holding, the tenants had jointly to cultivate the *Demesne* or *Inland* for the benefit of the lord. Each tenant held at least three different strips of arable land, in order to allow of a system of fallows being worked out by which the land was allowed one season in every three in which to recover itself after cropping. And of the strips, as indicated in the diagram, the same tenant would not hold three adjoining, but each man's strips would have strips belonging to his neighbours on either side of them. This ensured a fairer distribution of the land in matter of quality. The holding of each tenant was either a whole or a half *virgate* = 30 acres. The tenant who wanted more land, or lands, for higher farming than the common fields, could also occupy a *close*, more highly rented than the common field. The chief tenants held, as a rule, one or two closes. Below these, some *bordars* and *cottars,* holding a cottage and an acre or two of land, were probably employed as labourers by the villeins proper. In some parts of England, notably in the West, there were some slaves below these, forming, indeed, only nine per cent. of the total population recorded in *Domesday*,

but rising to twenty-four per cent. on the Welsh borders, indicating that the English Conquest began with extermination, and ended with preserving the Britons alive in a condition of slavery.

All the land, both villenage and demesne, was cultivated by joint labour. The villein had to render to his lord service of two leading kinds: (1) a man's regular labour for two or three days a week the whole year round, called *week work*, or *daily work;* and (2) extra labour for a few days at spring and autumn ploughing, and at harvest, called *boon-days*.[1] Exactly how they cultivated their land we do not know; we only know in broad outline that the system was that of common fields and rotation of crops and fallows: wheat or rye, oats or barley, and fallow. Ploughing was the heaviest work, and all the villein tenants clubbed their oxen to do the ploughing for all. The cottars had no oxen, so are never called on for ploughing as part of their tenancy duties. The serf was really a tenant, secure from dispossession so long as he paid his rent. But he could not migrate, nor marry daughter, nor send son into the Church, nor sell horse or beast, without the leave of the lord. It must be remembered that in those days the owners of land were themselves its cultivators, of which fact the important results were—

1. *Peace was kept.* Violent as the times were, there was hardly any agrarian robbery, even in 1315–21, a veritable famine period. And hence, as

[1] See the account of Cuxham Manor (in Rogers, *Six Centuries*, pp. 39–42) held by Merton College, Oxford.

secondary result, our early success in the breeding of sheep, and our consequent abundant wool.

2. *The Effects of Primogeniture were minimized.* The stock on the land was worth three times the land itself, and in this the younger children shared equally with the eldest.

3. *Distribution of Land was assisted.* For the eldest would find himself with too much land for the share he retained of the stock, and the younger children would find themselves with a share of stock but with no land at all. Hence exchange of some of the land for some of the stock would be next to inevitable.

4. *Legislative Aid to the Agricultural Interest,* for the encouragement of arable farming. Hence the system of corn-bounties, etc., and hence finally Protection, and the whole structure of the Corn Laws.

5. The so-called "English System" of land tenure, whereby the owner is expected to do the repairs and the permanent improvements, other than those implied in "good husbandry."

The village had in it men carrying on all necessary crafts. Most of these worked on a communal system, the smith, *e.g.*, holding land on condition of repairing the ploughs of the village and demesne, and one smith serving sometimes for more than one village. The village shop had not yet made its appearance; the wants to which it would have ministered being in those days met by infrequent journeys to a distant fair, when the labour of the family itself did not suffice. The village would

hold from sixty to eighty adult males. There was a *mill*—the lord's—where all the corn of the manor had to be ground at a fixed fee for the service; and the lord could seize handmills if the tenants used them to the detriment of his rights, and the miller was therefore an unpopular person,[1] of whom any evil was credible.

But the village of those days was not as a village now. True, the exterior appearance of it was not so very different. Then as now there was but one street, with a row of houses on each side. But the men inside the houses were different. *Then* they were the tenant farmers, the actual cultivators; *now*, they are the labourers, and a few artisans and shopkeepers, whilst the tenant farmers live in separate homesteads, away from the village. *Then*, they all cultivated the land on one plan and by communal labour; *now*, each tenant farmer is free to follow out his own plan. *Then*, the landlord was an actual cultivator, the labour he wanted being supplied to him by his tenants, not for a money wage, but as part of the terms on which they held their leases; *now*, the landlord either does not farm at all himself, or, if he does, it is with hired labour, in the same way as if he were himself a tenant farmer. And lastly, in those days the land was cultivated by small holders, and all of these were much on the same social level, the classes being much less widely separated then than now, except, of course, in the case of the lord himself. And the economic organization of this group was

[1] "'If thou be'st a miller,' answered Gurth, 'thou art doubly a thief.'"—*Ivanhoe*, Chap. XII.

on quite other than the modern lines. There was no individual freedom of motion, and hence no *competition*. The labour service rendered by the tenant in return for his holding may, if you please, be *called* a rent, but it was not rent in the sense of modern economics, for it was "not what the tenant could possibly afford, but what was customary."[1] And practically these small holders have now all disappeared.

We have said that there was no village shop. The labour of each family made it almost independent of exchange for the satisfaction of its wants. It had rough spinning and weaving of wool and linen, and rough tanning. Some things the villagers were obliged to buy from a distance. Salt had to be imported from Guienne, especially in wet summers, when in England there was not sun enough to evaporate the sea-water. Iron, which was worked in the Weald of Sussex, was also to some extent imported from Spain. Tar was a remedy for the "scab" in sheep. Millstones often came from near Paris. Save for such things as these, as the manors grew into towns, the family industries merely expanded. Thus it

[1] Whether this is a preferable state of things or not depends on how the terms are to be understood. Was "what was customary" more or less than "what the tenant could possibly afford"? This in its turn depends on what a man *can* "afford." Strictly, he can afford his whole margin above "necessaries." But what are "necessaries"? In such a connection it can only be the collective name for Standard of Comfort. So that the question whether custom was better or worse for the tenant than competition depends on whether the customary payment left him in possession of a higher or a lower standard of comfort than he could obtain for himself under competition.

was that they satisfied these more distant, more far-reaching wants which necessitated an organization of some kind for trading purposes; and hence, as we shall see, the Merchant Gilds. So far as exchange was indispensable, it was carried on at *Markets* and *Fairs*, which were frequent, and brought in considerable fees to their overlords, *e.g.* Winchester, Stourbridge, and Abingdon.

These Markets and Fairs were held in towns, and towns gradually grew up around their sites; but, as we have seen, the Saxons were slow to create towns (p. 10), and even when towns came, the condition of the early townsfolk was servile and unpromising. With great acuteness Adam Smith points out that the very privileges granted to them bear evidence to the servility of their state.[1] Even after the Norman Conquest the condition was difficult to improve. The townsfolk lived to a large extent by sale of wares at the periodical fairs; but the wares had to be conveyed thither, and on their way were subject to taxes: *Passage*, on passing through a manor; *Pontage*, for crossing a bridge; *Lastage*, a tax on goods by weight [12 sacks = 1 *last* of wool]; and *Stallage*, for setting up a booth or stall in a fair or market. Exemption from

[1] "The people to whom it is granted as a privilege that they might give away their own daughters in marriage without the consent of their lord, that upon their death their own children, and not their lord, should succeed to their goods, and that they might dispose of their own effects by will, must, before those grants were made, have been either altogether or very nearly in the same state of villenage with the occupiers of land in the country."—*Wealth of Nations*, III. iii.

these taxes gave its first economic meaning to the term "*Free Trader.*"

In this servile condition the towns of most countries seem at first to have lived. The process of emerging from it was one of fishing in troubled waters; a process in which the cities of Italy—Venice, Genoa, and Pisa—took the lead, being much aided by the Crusades. For, as Adam Smith puts it, "The most destructive frenzy that ever befell the European nations was a source of opulence to those republics."

II

RISE AND FALL OF GILDS MERCHANT

So far, produce has been obtained for the satisfaction of human wants by what is known as the *Family System*. Practically, with the few exceptions we have been led to note as we went along, each family has been a self-sufficing group. The men have won the raw material from the soil, the women have prepared the food and have spun and woven the clothing. As the manors grew into towns the Family Industries merely expanded.

But in the development of every industry there *may* be four stages—the *Family*, the *Gild*, the *Domestic*, and the *Factory*. Not that every industry has gone through all these stages; but there are some, the history of one of which we shall trace with some care, which have actually done so. But nearly all of those industries which have come down to us from old times have passed through a stage in which they have been organized in accordance with the system we are now going to consider, the system of Gilds.[1]

The Gilds were of four kinds—

[1] The word *Gild* means originally a festival, or sacrificial feast; it is then applied to the company who thus feast together. Cf. the Latin form *company*. See Brentano in *English Gilds*, E.E.T.S., pp. lxi. and lxviii.; and also as to Gilds being a development of the family organization, and on England as the birthplace and London the cradle of the Gilds.

1. *Religious* Gilds.—These were the earliest of the voluntary associations. Their purposes were what we should call social, as well as religious, their funds being expended on feasts, masses for the dead, the Church burial fees, charitable aid, etc.

2. *Frith* Gilds.—These were compulsory associations, each with a corporate responsibility for the good conduct of all its members, and for mutual assistance in legal matters, such as defence against false accusations.

3. Gilds *Merchant*.—The trading organizations of burgess Masters.[1]

4. *Craft* Gilds.—The associations of artisans.

It is only with the last two of these that we shall be concerned.

Of towns, such as we have found them to have been, there were about eighty in England at the time of the Norman Conquest. By this time the English have greatly changed from their original lack of civilization, and the Norman conquered a country no longer barbarous. Literature and the arts were abreast of the time, and the Norman, as Stubbs says, destroyed more than he brought. But he brought discipline and order, gifts which were then the priceless conditions of economic progress. "The good order King William made must not be forgotten," says the *Peterborough Chronicle;* "it was such that any man who was

[1] Merchant Gilds, first *mentioned* 1093, must have been rising during second half of eleventh century (Ashley, i. 71); the Craft Gilds about a century later (*Id.* i. 81), these last being mentioned in the Pipe Roll for 1130.

himself aught might travel from end to end of the land unharmed; and no man durst kill another, however great the injury which he had received." And so again of Henry I: "No man durst misdo against another in his time. He made peace for man and beast." And though the progress of this development of order suffered rude interruption in Stephen's reign, when "every man did what was wrong in his own eyes," and when "they filled the land full of castles and the castles of devils," yet even through those dark days the boroughs were steadily advancing, for a great change was going on at this time. This was the gradual substitution of payment for service. It is generally spoken of as a change from payment in kind to payment in money. But this does not, in the modern sense of the terms, bring out the force of the alteration. If a man who had been bound to service could commute this service for an annual payment of barley, chickens, or pigs, he would still be paying for his holding "in kind"; yet, *to him*, the change would have been far as from east to west; for he would have passed out of serfage, and become *free*. The Lords liked the change well enough as long as the payments they received enabled them to purchase freely of the cheap labour of the people; but when the Great Death [1] had made labour dear they tried every means to restore the old manorial rights over the actual labour of the people. But it was now too late, the people had tasted freedom and had learned their power; and death and democracy give nothing back.

[1] See below, Chapter VI.

So far as this was really a change to money payments, it is another illustration of how circumstance must alter before organization. The change *implies* the existence of coinage and markets. Places there must be where a man can be sure of getting goods for the money he has received in commutation for his labour dues. Such places will obviously have to be the towns.

Now the first effect of the Conquest had indeed been injury to the towns, but from this it took them but twenty years to recover. It was of immense importance to the commercial side of the town life that the dominions of the Norman kings were so wide. A charter from an Angevin king granting rights of commerce and freedom from tolls "throughout all my dominions, both the hither and the further side of the sea," was in effect a grant of Free Trade for the English merchant from Berwick to Bayonne, from the Cheviots to the Pyrenees. Such advantages made the towns prosper, and their prosperity favoured their growth and their claims to constitutional organization—causes which would naturally act and re-act to produce an acceleration of advance. And to this constitutional organization the feudal character has to give way. The *hanse* or *gild* has come to stop. The traders combined for their own protection, for the regulation of their trade, and for the exclusion of rivals. A charter saved them from being *adulterine,* as without such charter they would have been called, and made it impossible for them to be broken up, and finally enabled them to impose the by-laws of their Gild as the rule of the whole borough. Soon they commute their

taxes for a fixed sum which they collect themselves and pay direct to the Exchequer. In 1191 the Gild of London becomes its governing body, the sign of its recognition as such being, here as elsewhere, its having its own Mayor. And other towns followed the example of London, *e.g.* Leicester, in 1251. Nor did the towns thus favoured lose their place in the shire system—they were still represented in Parliament, thus giving to our House of Commons to this day its mingled character, territorial and commercial.

These towns, about eighty in number, were what we should now call villages. A town of the first rank would only contain some seven or eight thousand inhabitants. Starting under the protection of a lord they paid at first tolls for the security of their "market days," an institution still of importance. And for maintaining their trade privileges the Merchant Gilds grew up. The date of their first inception is not known, but they seem to be first mentioned in 1093. Charters to them begin with Henry I, and become numerous under Henry II. Such charters acknowledge the Gilds as the predominant ruling power within the town, and confer thereon the rights of municipal self-government. The powers of the Gild Merchant were—

1. Control and monopoly of all the trades within the town, except the trade in victuals, which was always left free.
2. Liberty to trade in other towns.
3. Powers to compel wealthy outsiders to be-

come members of the Gild, by fining them for illicit trading if they did not.

4. Recognized authority for looking after the interests of members when trading in other towns.
5. Making collective bargains when foreigners visited the town, under right of *cavel*, or of having a share in these common purchases.
6. To act as sick and provident clubs.
7. Jurisdiction, to punish breaches of Gild rules or commercial honesty, or such offences as "forestalling," or buying for re-sale in the same fair or market.

Such were the Merchant Gilds under whose influence the number of "Towns" in England soon doubled. From their first mention in 1093 to 1307 is hardly more than 200 years, but by that time we have 160 towns represented in the Parliaments of Edward I, whereof 92 had Gilds Merchant of which we have evidence. Most likely they all had them.

The regulations of four of these Gilds, Totnes, Southampton, Leicester, and Berwick, have come down to us. They are so much alike, though the towns were so far apart, that we conclude that all Gilds Merchant had pretty much the same organization. The *President* was an *alderman* (sometimes there were two) who had two or four assistant *Wardens* (*échevins*); and the three or the six managed the funds and estates of the Gild. A council of twenty-four aided them.

Membership was numerous, and did not, at first, exclude craftsmen. But it is not easy to say who were *in*cluded. Eldest sons of members were admitted free, and younger sons on payment of a reduced entrance-fee. And though merchants from other towns were admitted to membership, it seems probable that the usual qualification for such membership was the possession of land within the town limits. These were the *burgage* tenants, or burgesses. And the Gild Merchant seems to have been, at least at first, closely connected with this territorial citizenship.[1] In fact agriculture was one of the main occupations of the burgesses, and its produce one of the principal elements of their trade.

With such powers and so constituted it was natural that they should be jealous of their privileges, for the maintenance whereof they drew up regulations and exercised jurisdiction. These regulations aimed at the common good of the Gild as a whole. It was an offence to act as agent for an outsider, since this evaded the Gild monopoly. It was an offence to dishonestly dye or improperly mix wool, since this would damage the repute of the Gild as a whole.[2] And as the member was expected to stand by his Gild, so his Gild in turn stood by him. If he were anywhere imprisoned, the Gild authorities journeyed thither to procure

[1] "*Citizen* and *gild-brother* were considered identical." Brentano, p. xcix.

[2] "But the Gild never assumed a right over the life and limbs of its members; compensation only and fines were used for punishments, the highest penalty being expulsion." Brentano, p. ciii.

his release.[1] And being thus eminently social, it touched the everyday life of the citizen at many points. "Sick gildsmen were visited, and wine and food sent to them from the feasts; brethren who had fallen into poverty were relieved; their daughters were dowered for marriage or the convent; and when a member died his funeral was attended by the brethren and the due rites provided for."

These Gilds Merchant were associations of *traders*. Industrial associations were to come later. And this order, which seems strange to us now-a-days, was so natural as to be really inevitable. England was then an agricultural country almost exclusively.

We first grew what we wanted to consume; then, having a surplus, we wanted to exchange that surplus for the products of the arts of other peoples more advanced in an industrial sense than ourselves. Dealers in imported commodities thus arise before our own arts are advanced enough to be organized. In England, therefore, trade preceded manufacture. But the agriculture which is thus found to be primitive in time, remains also for long years primitive in its stage of progress; and indeed it is not until our manufactures are in their turn organized, and their prosperity overflows into the country, and their appetite for improvement begins to ameliorate, under the economic Law of Substitution,[2] the methods of our cultivation, that

[1] "If a brother falls into poverty, if he incurs losses by fire or shipwreck, if illness or mutilation renders him unable to work, the brothers contribute to his assistance."—*Ibid.*

[2] Marshall, *Economics of Industry*, page 216.

those methods begin to keep pace with the rapid advance of our skill in manufactures. Thus that "progress of opulence"—the progress in the order, Foreign Trade, Manufactures, Agriculture, which Adam Smith in his Book III regards as a reversal of the natural order—was after all not so unnatural as he thought it.

But the industrial organization was none the less bound to come. Men working at handicrafts had at first been admitted[1] to the Gilds Merchant in sufficient numbers to ensure that craftsmen as a whole should be acquainted with the advantages of belonging to such organizations. Consequently, as craftsmen increased in numbers and improved their position whilst the Gilds Merchant became more exclusive,[2] it was but natural that they should organize for themselves; and thus we have *Craft Gilds*.

The fall of the Gilds Merchant was inevitable, though details of its history are wanting. What we know is perhaps best told by Brentano (*English Gilds*, Early English Text Society, pp. cix.–cxiii.). While freedom was to be won the citizens were benignant to the poor. But success made them insolent and hard. The old merchant families became an aristocracy, claiming rights to tax the man "without hearth and honour, who lives by his labour." Refusal of legal redress and all kinds of oppression followed. The craftsmen who had

[1] Provided they were possessed of full citizenship, *i.e.* that they owned estates of a certain value within the territory of the town.

[2] "The older the Gild-Statutes, the more favourable are they to the man of low rank."—Brentano, p. cviii.

helped to win the independence of the merchant gildsmen, fell under the *mundium* (protection in return for sworn service and assessment) of these same gildsmen, and "those who struck the lion down had to pay homage to the wolves." Fear there was of a new serfdom. On the Continent this developed into a fierce civil war. In England the struggle was less violent. In both the same result was arrived at about the same time. Political equality was secured, and the craftsmen retained the bulk of the municipal power. The commonalty of London, in the 49th year of Edward III, enacted that all city dignitaries, including members of Parliament, were to be elected by the trading companies. And even earlier than this all citizens of London had to belong to the trade Gilds, from which were to spring the twelve great Companies.

This industrial organization began to manifest itself about a century later than the Merchant Gild. The coming of the new organization marks, as practically always, that the industrial circumstances have really changed. Hitherto the family system of industry has prevailed, and each family has been almost entirely self-sufficing. Now, the craft system is to take its place, a system in which bodies of men are to be completely and exclusively occupied in some one particular industry. For such a change it is obvious that the first precondition is a large increase of population. A comparatively small population would contain merchants enough, each one trading in several commodities, to form a Gild Merchant. But the population would have to be much larger to support weavers enough to

form a Gild of weavers. And again, where Gilds of craftsmen can arise the articles made must have been of a kind to command a wide market, being portable and of universal demand. Where these conditions obtain, the separation of employments advances rapidly. Particular industries tend to gravitate towards certain congenial localities: the men carrying on those industries have thus local facilities for organization, and organization is sure to come.

III

RISE OF THE CRAFT GILDS

TRADE had been carried on in towns by merchants. Owning land in those towns made a man a *burgess*, and of burgesses the Gilds Merchant had been made up. Anybody who bought and sold anything beyond provisions for daily use was a "merchant." And any man who owned a plot of land, however small, would not have been excluded from the Gild, even though a craftsman. Hence at first the craftsmen lived in harmony with the Gild. But, from the first, membership involved a property qualification, for besides possessing land, a man must pay his entrance-fee. Now the class which possessed no land and could not or would not pay an entrance-fee, rapidly increased, and this class consisted almost entirely of craftsmen. The richer class grew in wealth, and devoted themselves entirely to trade, and the crafts were left to the poor. Hence the regulation that no one with "dirty hands" or with "blue nails," or "who hawked his wares about the streets," should be a member of the Gild, and that no craftsman could be admitted until he had forsworn his craft for a year and a day. Such rules there were for Winchester, Marlborough, etc. Meanwhile the Gild Merchant had become the municipality, with rights

of jurisdiction in the "court-leet," and monopoly of the trade of the town. What the craftsman had to sell he could sell only to a member of the Gild of his town. Hence as craftsmen increased there became inevitable a two-fold struggle—

(*a*) To obtain for their own organizations, the Craft Gilds, rights of supervision over their own members, independent of the powers of the municipal authorities.

(*b*) To break down the trading monopoly of the Merchant Gilds.

Gilds Merchant had not been specialized—no special market was then wide enough to support its own special organization. There was, for example, a Gild Merchant for Norwich, but no separate Gild of dealers in cloth. But Craft Gilds were specialized to trades, for now the separate industries have become large enough to support separate organizations. Now the commodity which was the first one in England to possess the qualifications necessary for securing a wide market (cf. p. 32) was woollen cloth. Naturally enough, then, it was woollen cloth which began and led the struggle of the craft against the Merchant Gild. Weavers and fullers, whose Gilds we know to have existed in London, Lincoln, and Oxford as early as 1130, obtained royal recognition of their Gilds, and, following the analogy of the merchants, allowed no one to exercise the craft unless a member of the Gild. These men led the struggle of the Craft against the Merchant Gild; and though we know little of the process the result is clear.

The trading monopoly of the Gild Merchant has fallen by 1300. When in 1335 Edward III allowed the merchants of other countries to trade freely in England, they, being "of whatsoever estate or condition," were to trade "with what persons it shall please them." The monopoly is gone, and the Gilds Merchant go after it. As separate organizations their day is done. What becomes of them we hardly know. Some of them seem to have survived in an altered form. Possibly the Merchant Adventurers are another form of survival. But the subject is obscure.

The crafts have now obtained powers to deal in their own courts with disputes among their members. By 1377 there were 48 crafts in London alone; and by this time the tables were turned, and instead of craftsmen being ineligible for citizenship, citizenship was only open to craftsmen.

Organization of the Craft Gild.—The authority was vested in *wardens*, *bailiffs*, or *masters*, to supervise the industry and punish offenders. These were elected at full meetings of the whole craft. For admission to the craft the man must be approved by the officials, either as having served *Apprenticeship*, or on giving actual proof of skill. Soon after 1300 apprenticeship became necessary.

The regulations aimed at securing good work—*e. g.* night work was prohibited, as leading to poor work. Old age and sick pensions are provided for; a burial fund for those dying poor; pensions for widows; and if a man fall sick in the middle of his work, his task shall be finished for him "by those of the trade, that the work be not lost."

Characteristics of the Craft-Gild System.

1. Dealing in necessaries of *stable* demand, and not in unstable luxuries, it was able to supply consumers outside the family group.

2. Capital was of little importance; skill and "connection" were everything.

3. As yet there was no "working class" in the modern sense. There were journeymen, serving under the masters, and hoping, and as a rule able, to become masters of their craft after a few years.

4. The master craftsman was an independent producer, working in his own shop, with his own tools, and at his own choice of hours. Hence it is not the master, but the journeyman, whose position should be compared with that of the workman of to-day.

5. Municipal control with a view to securing a good quality of produce. After the fall of the Gild System, this function was for long in abeyance, and has been lately somewhat revived in Adulteration Acts, etc.

6. Each craftsman had to choose his craft and abide in it, with a view to more perfect supervision. This principle, afterwards enforced in the great *Statute of Apprentices*, 5 *Eliz.*, *c.* 4, 1563, was embodied in a Statute as early as 1363; and lasted until it went down before the assault of Adam Smith and the pressure of the Industrial Revolution, and was finally repealed in 1814.

7. The members of each craft lived together in

the same street or locality. Of this there are traces left to this day, in cases like the Bermondsey tanning.

Such was the plan of organization of most of our industries at the middle of the fourteenth century. And not merely for manufactures. The rustic labourer had his Gild, and in some cases also his Gildhall in the villages, and found there ready to his hand the organization which gave some of its inspiration and most of its strength to the Peasant Revolt of 1381.

Citizenship, then, has come to include membership of a craft. And the town, organized on this basis of citizenship, controlled industry. The old association based on land has given way to one of *persons;* it has changed from *real* to *personal*. And the various "misteries" were welded into a whole which *constituted* the municipal life of the town. Politically, they were the organs of local administration and self-government; *economically*, they were the instruments of supervision in an age when everything was supervised. And in this citizenship plutocracy ruled rather than democracy. The Mayor and his brethren of the Council were the ultimate authority in trade disputes.

Essentially, no one could be allowed to carry on any occupation within the limits of the town, unless he had been admitted a craft freeman.

The organization accorded with the economic time. It was the day of the *local market*, and industrial organization was also *local*. And the great object of the organization was to do for a man's trade and earnings what the Frith Gilds had

done for his person, and secure him in the safe and regular enjoyment thereof. The craft was governed by its meetings, and at these meetings the master and wardens were appointed. And as the purpose of the Gild was to regulate the trade, it is obvious that that object could only be carried out if all who belonged to the trade belonged also to the Gild. Hence, the regulation that all of the trade must belong to the Gild was, at all events at first, one of government and not of monopoly; and this is shown by the fact that at first, while none of the trade were allowed to remain outside of the Gild, all were allowed to enter it; and it is not until the craft has degenerated into the Corporation that the spirit of monopoly endeavours to limit the size of the body of the craft. And before this same degeneration one frequent regulation of the craft referred to the number of "servants" that one master craftsman might employ—often only one. This shows that such "servants" (*i.e.* wage-earning labourers) must have been scarce, and that at this time there was no "*working class*."

IV

CRAFT GILDS AND WORKING-CLASS ORGANIZATIONS

THE Craft Gilds, then, are now fully organized, and, for most industries in England, the story of the crafts and their development is that of the Trade. For the name "Gild" soon drops out of use, and "Mistery" or "Craft," takes its place, and the Craft system continues its growth and its own internal changes from Edward III to Elizabeth. During the reign of Elizabeth the tendency to recognize the crafts as "Corporations" has become marked; and it is under this name that they and their privileges are assailed by Adam Smith. But during these two centuries—say, roughly, 1350–1550—there has not occurred, for most industries, the extent and intensity of economic change that would at once cause and condition any fundamental alteration of economic system.

Yet for one great industry, or class of industries, the economic change does arise, and the consequent alteration in system does take place; and the textiles, with wool in the leading place, pass from the Gild, or Craft, to the Domestic organization.

Hence, therefore, we have to trace separately these two distinct lines of development; first, the slow and continuous growth of the Gild or Corporation system—a growth without revolution, and

along lines already laid down; and, secondly, the more revolutionary or catastrophic change to a system of large manufacture, wherein by passing through the *domestic*, our textiles develop into the *factory* system.

And firstly, then, for the further story of the Gilds.

In some trades, particularly the textiles, we had Gilds with a membership of workers at a very early date. The twelfth century gave us Weavers' Gilds, and these must have existed side by side with the Gilds Merchant. But these Weavers' Gilds took their authority from the Crown, whereas the Craft Gilds of the fourteenth century were created with the approval and under the control of the civic authorities. And the relation between the two, when Merchant and Craft Gilds did exist contemporaneously, is difficult to trace. Cunningham suggests that perhaps in some at least of such cases the crafts were specialized branches of the Gild Merchant. This, however, is probably going too far; and the more likely explanation is that as at first the Gild Merchant did not exclude the craftsman, so when the craftsman found himself no longer welcomed in the Gild Merchant he combined with others, who resembled him in station, though not necessarily identical in trade. And that thus the Craft Gilds grew by differentiation of the parts of the Gild Merchant, and aggregation of like particles.

The object of these Craft Gilds was the "regulation" of the trade. Our judgment, therefore, upon the crafts as institutions will be but a particular

case of the more general judgment which we pass upon the desirability of regulation as such.

There can be no doubt that much of this system of regulation was intended to check fraud, and maintain the corporate good name of the craft. And of the provisions which make up the system none was more important than the appointment of the "Searchers." As early as 1363 it was enacted that two of every craft be chosen "Searchers," to see that none use other craft than the same which he has chosen; and by the end of Edward III's reign it was ordained that "all the misteries of the city of London shall be lawfully regulated and governed, that so no knavery, false workmanship, or deceit shall be found in any manner in the said misteries. And in each mistery there shall be chosen and sworn four or six or more or less, according as the mistery shall need; which persons so chosen and sworn shall have full power from the mayor well and lawfully to do and to perform the same." These regulations seem to indicate that there was at the time more rather than less of petty knavery as compared with modern times; and that the more highly placed in the Gilds recognized the advantages of honesty as practised by the others. Fraud of coarser sort seems to have been abundant —short weight, stones in hay, and the mixing of various kinds of leather, *e.g.* basil with cordwain, and calfskin with cowskin. Now there certainly seems to be some reason for thinking that a "corporate conscience" is necessary as a defence against this kind of fraud, as witness the work of our present London County Council, which has

brought it about that the "coal-cellars which a year or two ago held two tons of coal will now only hold a ton and a-half." But it will not do to suppose, as Cunningham seems to suppose, that all this regulation was to the advantage of the workman, as compared with the modern competitive *régime*. The legal regulations were made by the payers of wages, not by the receivers of them. And every care was taken to prevent competition from "functionating" when the result might be favourable to the workmen. For example, the cordwainers, who after swearing in four of their number to see that "those who shape and make shoes shall mix no manner of leather with other, but shall make them wholly of one leather," proceed to enact: "And it is forbidden that the servant workman in cordwaining or others shall hold any meeting to make provision which may be to the prejudice of the trade and to the detriment of the common people, under pain of imprisonment." In fact, the Gild consisted of the aristocracy of labour; and those were times when all aristocracies were fully alive to the differences of destiny fixed by Providence as between themselves and commonalties. They were the *élite* of each trade, and chosen peoples have habitually approved the choice. But this fact was the cause at once of their early strength and of their ultimate breakdown.

But at the time of which we are speaking, the fourteenth century, the Gild system harmonized so well with the spirit of the age that the formation of a Gild became a kind of instinct of self-preservation, which went as low down as the parish clerks,

Nor were more solid reasons wanting. The craft obtained the monopoly of the trade, and none could be a tradesman unless in the craft. Whence sprang abuses, when the craftsmen kept down their numbers by demanding heavy entrance-fees, and placing other difficulties in the way of joining the craft. So that by about 1475 various trades had openly avowed their purpose of protecting themselves against the competition of stranger workmen.

Early in the fifteenth century the greater London industries had secured unto themselves separate incorporation; and they remain to this day as the City Companies. Of these we shall hear a good deal.

And classes began to be differentiated *within* the crafts, chiefly by discrimination of Apprenticeship and Journeyman Service. Hence there were in a fully developed Gild, three classes of members: Apprentices, Journeymen, and Masters. Of these:

1. *Apprenticeship* was at first exacted by the regulations of the various crafts acting individually. The usual time for apprenticeship was seven years—

> "But when my seven long years are out,
> Oh, then I'll marry Sally";

but various other periods might be agreed upon. The master is to "find" the apprentice in food, clothing, shelter, and chastisement; which last item at all events does not seem to have been subject to short measure. A small annual payment, increasing year by year, was due by the master to the

apprentice, from 3*d.* in the first year to 10*s.* in the last.

This apprenticeship was virtually compulsory from 1363 onwards, under the enactments of the crafts themselves. But in 1563 the enactment passes into law by the great Statute of that date, the *Statute of Apprentices*, 5 *Eliz. c.* 4. All sorts of measures were taken to restrict apprenticeship to the children of the well-to-do, and to exclude "foreigners," *i.e.* persons from outside the *towns*. Also to restrict the number of apprentices a man might take, generally to two.

2. The *Journeyman* is much more difficult to investigate. His position is not so clearly defined in law, and moreover seems to have been essentially various and dubious. Sometimes we find journeymen taking part even in the governance of the craft, sometimes the victims of laws forbidding them to combine amongst themselves, and "make congregations." The journeyman was at first one who hoped, and as a rule succeeded, in making his way to be a master. And it was the fading of this hope which cast him back on other ways of seeking prosperity, by means of combinations of quite another sort.

3. The *Masters*.—Let us look at these for a moment by themselves.

In the early Middle Ages our economic activity had been practically all agricultural. Then there arose slowly the merchant class, embodied in the Gilds Merchant. But with the rise of the Craft Gild we find, for the first time, a body of men with whom manufacture was the real business of life.

At first this was a mere separation of an employment, due to the *progress of peace*. For under that favouring influence the productiveness of farming industry so increased that a smaller proportion of the population sufficed to grow food for all, thus setting more hands free for "other-than-food" production; and the demand for goods other than food became constant and *reliable* enough to enable men to devote their whole time to meeting it. And thus was developed a higher skill than the ordinary peasant, turning an occasional hand to manufactures, could possibly acquire. The possession of such skill, handed down by inheritance and training, differentiated the *artisan class* from the cultivators. But this artisan class is not what we should now call a "working class." That is to come later on. The *Master* was a man of substance. As a burgess of the town he could undertake to train and maintain apprentices, under the recognized regulations.

Women, save only his own wife and daughter, he could not employ, at all events in England; in some of the Continental Gilds workers were under no sex disability. But the conditions under which this artisan class worked at that time were wholly unlike those which now prevail. Our modern distinctions of Labourer, Capitalist, Entrepreneur, etc., did not then apply. If a man wanted some cloth woven, he bought the yarn, and either took it to the artisan's house to be there woven in the artisan's loom, or, if he had a loom of his own, he sent for the artisan to come and weave it. And when the work was done it was paid for by the piece. Such

a person would be "employer," or "customer," or "producer," or "consumer" in modern terminology, according to the aspect of him regarded as most conspicuous at the moment. And the craftsman so employed was a "labourer" because he worked, a "capitalist" in virtue of his own tools and workshop; and if ever, failing an immediate order, he bought materials and manufactured some goods in the hope of a market for them, he appeared as an "entrepreneur." Such conditions have survived amongst us to this day in the gypsies' cart with its load of baskets, etc., for sale. "Cane chairs to mend" and "Knives to grind, scissors to grind" are street cries even yet, and proclaim the survival, in these humble industries, of economic conditions six centuries old.

Wherefore the early craftsman simply represents the side of industry that was not agricultural; and rather than say that he combined in his person the functions of labourer and capitalist, employer and employed, it is better to decline the anachronism of applying these terms to him at all. They are an artisan class; but they are not as yet a *labour class;* still less a "*working class*" in the modern sense.

But now, by about 1350, we have a real *labour class*. Small at first, but increasing as time goes on. It consisted of men who either had never been apprentices, or who had come out of apprenticeship, but had not yet set up for themselves as master craftsmen. They acted as assistants to the masters, and at first did so for a time only, till they had saved stock, and found opportunity for starting on their own account. These men were

called *servants*, or *yeomen*, or *valets*. And as they increase in numbers it becomes more and more obvious that only a minority of them will ever be able to become masters. In fact, their very existence shows that the economic conditions have been changing. And whereas in the earlier days the energies of all but a few had been fully engaged in meeting the elementary wants of a primitive society —the need of food, clothing, and shelter—now, those needs can be met by the labour of a far smaller proportion of the total population, and larger numbers are set free for more elaborate production. And as there are many more people wanting things in general, the law of averages begins to assert itself, and we become increasingly certain that at any moment it will be possible to find some one who wants some particular thing. That is to say, that men can now safely make things in the confident expectation of being able to sell them; and the age of "anticipatory production" has begun. A man living in the early "family stage" of industry which we have described above would only make a coat when he happened to want one himself, or, at all events, when he knew definitely of some one who did want one, and was prepared to give him something in return for supplying that want. But now all that is changed, and though the coat-maker may not happen to know who it is that will buy his coat when finished, yet he is content to make coats in confident anticipation that some one will want them. Hence there arises an industrial class, in which the possession of capital becomes of importance, and within

it a labour class, consisting of men who look to this anticipatory production to procure them a constant reward for their labour.

But at about this same time we begin to see how the crafts themselves are becoming exclusive. The child of the craftsman is admitted to the craft on easy terms, but the terms are hard to the stranger. Entrance fees are purposely fixed at a high figure, in order to keep the numbers down, and apprenticeship is only open to the free and legitimately born. And sometimes even in England, and often on the Continent of Europe, a "masterpiece" was demanded of the candidate for admission to the craft, and none could exercise the craft until his masterpiece had been approved. The word "masterpiece" has of recent times greatly changed its meaning, and is applied, particularly in connection with the fine arts, to the best thing a man has done. But the "masterpiece" was in those days simply the work which proved a man as a master of his craft, and would more nearly answer to the "Diploma Picture" of a modern Academy. And the burden of having to produce it was a heavy one, for it often took long to do, and was wholly unsaleable when done. Another obligation often enforced on the apprentice desirous of qualifying as a master was that of travelling, sometimes for a considerable term of years. This gave rise to the establishment of the Auberges, or Houses of Call, where the wandering journeyman could hear if work were obtainable in the neighbourhood. Little wonder, then, that men thus classified and locally concentrated, and provided with common cause of grievance, should unite into organizations for

mutual aid and comfort; and the consequent organizations, when they come, are called *Fraternities*. And though it must not be assumed that between these fraternities and the modern Trades Unions there is any very close link of direct succession, yet there can be no doubt as to the great similarity between the two organizations.

Nor were they very dissimilar in some of their results. It is natural enough that with a labour class, a labour question should also arise, to the perplexity of legislators. Almost immediately after the Black Death, as early as 1350 and 1362, we find that the London ordinances give powers to the Wardens of the Craft to deal with combined refusals to work, which we should in our time call Strikes. It has been urged that these ordinances do not record any unqualified defeat for the labourers, and indeed, for reasons which we shall discover presently, the very time at which these powers were conferred precludes the idea of such unqualified defeat. In addition to which it must be observed that the effect was to remove the determination of wages from the individual employer to the mistery as a whole. And such a power, vested in the mistery in its corporate capacity, may not appear so very unfair when we remember that at this same time the same power had authority to fix the remuneration of the master craftsman, and claimed to keep him up to the mark in the quality of the work he might supply.

The Masters and the Journeymen rapidly though gradually drifted further apart, and by about 1390 the fraternities of the Journeymen, with an organization modelled on that of the Craft Gilds them-

selves, were fairly established in England. They seem to have claimed to wear a distinctive uniform, or "livery," and to meet annually for masses and other religious observances, and for *other purposes*. Against these last the masters protested, as being nothing but conspiracies for the raising of wages. But these Fraternities were being consolidated under very favourable circumstances. The whole country had been stirred to its depths by the Peasant Revolt of 1381. And the "Poor Priests" of the Wyclif movement had given a religious basis to the national mental excitement which had culminated in that revolt. Religious fraternities were numerous and popular. Whence the Journeymen seem to have been enabled to kill two birds with one stone, and to have organized their Fraternities on a religious basis, with an eye to both worlds at once. Once formed, they enter upon a career of struggle, generally ending in compromise, with the Craft Gild of the masters, the chief points in dispute being the terms on which a journeyman should be admitted a master, and the number of apprentices a master might take. These points were not to receive their final adjudication until in 1563 they passed from the realm of regulation into that of statute law by the enactment of the *Statute of Apprentices*.

Meantime, what of the Craft Gilds themselves? Within the craft there has been growing up an inner ring, formed of the richer members of the craft, and gradually transforming its government into a plutocratic oligarchy. A striking instance of this is found in the livery of the London companies. But as the crafts thus succeeded politically

in one direction, they were in another aspect, the democratic aspect, committing a slow suicide. No longer an organization of the trade as a whole, but only of certain interests within it, and closely pressed by opposing interests, which, though without the Gild were within the trade, the Gild finds itself in a condition of unstable equilibrium, ready to fall at the first shock of change in the economic conditions by which it is surrounded. And in the sixteenth century the shock of economic change was to reach it. For now the idea of national industry was springing up, and the merely local groups and markets have had their day, and the Trade Union is now a possibility of the future. Here, as before, and as always, the new organization does not effect the change, it merely marks the fact that the change has already come.

One clear contrast, already alluded to, is the crystallization into statute law of provisions which as craft regulations had been more or less familiar for two hundred years. By the *Statute of Apprentices*, technically described as 5 *Eliz. cap.* 4, and passed in 1563, an order of things which had existed for two centuries in an inchoate form among the Craft Gilds, became law for all the traders of the time. This statute was a very voluminous document, as statutes regulating labour are apt to be. Yet its chief enactments can be reduced to comparatively few heads.

1. No man could carry on any trade, craft or mistery, unless he had been thereunto apprenticed to a master of the said trade, craft, or mistery.

2. Any householder might take as apprentices youths under twenty-one years of age whose parents

could show themselves to be possessed of a certain fortune.

3. For three apprentices one journeyman must be kept, and one other journeyman for every apprentice above three.

4. Journeymen must be retained in service at least one year, and must receive three months' notice of a coming dismissal.

5. The hours of labour were fixed at twelve *as a minimum*—an enactment the spirit of which should be compared with that of our modern Factory Acts.

6. Wages were to be fixed by the magistrates.

7. Unmarried women from twelve to forty years of age could be assigned by the magistrates to service at such wages as they determined; and if a woman refused so to serve, she was to be committed to ward till that she consent. In this summary fashion "the servant question" was disposed of in those days.

8. Justices were empowered to settle all disputes between masters and apprentices, and to protect the apprentices.

Few statutes have been so variously viewed as this one. Mr. George Howell, in his *Conflicts of Labour and Capital*, speaks strongly in favour of the Act from the workman's point of view, as procuring for him his chief desideratum—regularity of employment. And for another reason. The limitation of the numbers of the apprentices, by limiting competition, prevented the skilled workman from being brought down to the level of common labourers. But this contention, urged by so

able and so representative a writer as Mr. Howell, serves to emphasize the fact that the early writers who pleaded on behalf of their own class for greater freedom of combination, were really contending for an aristocracy of labour, rather than on behalf of the labouring class as a whole.

On the other hand, Prof. Stanley Jevons (*The State in Relation to Labour*, pp. 34–5) says: "From first to last it aimed at industrial slavery. It was a monstrous law. . . . Such was liberty, such was industry, under Good Queen Bess, at least in the intention of the governing classes. In operation the statute was, there is reason to believe, little more than a dead letter, except as regards the important sections relating to apprenticeship, of which the evil influence has hardly yet died out."

An earlier opinion is that of Adam Smith, who, regarding the Statute as a case of governmental interference with trade, assails it on first principles. "The property which every man has in his own labour, as it is the original foundation of all other property, so it is the most sacred and inviolable. The patrimony of a poor man lies in the strength and dexterity of his hands; and to hinder him from employing this strength and dexterity in what manner he thinks proper, without injury to his neighbour, is a plain violation of this most sacred property." And as to the professed guarantee afforded by the Act as against bad work, Adam Smith sees no use in it, announcing that "Long apprenticeships are altogether unnecessary."

But whatever views different authorities may take of the economic results and qualities of the Statute of 1563, most are agreed that when, late

in the eighteenth and early in the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution crushed this law and the Law of Parochial Settlement together, the modern form of Trades Unions sprang from the ruins. When the Domestic gave way to the Factory type of industry the great want of the master manufacturers was of men. Hence men were welcomed, come they from what parish they might, and no question might be safely raised as to the forty days' qualification under Charles II's Law.[1] Welcome they were, though they brought with them no 'prenticed skill: the machines were clamorous for a new skill, not to be bought at the price of the entrance fee or the masterpiece of the old apprenticeship. So both these laws were ground to pieces in the clattering clutch of the newborn giant Machinery. Once again, as in 1350 and 1351[2] and times innumerable since, the brazen pot of Economic Law and the earthen pot of Statute have collided in their flotation down the stream of time, and the earthen pot has been shattered and sunk. Not only men from a distance—the "foreigners" of four centuries ago—but women and children are now freely employed amongst the machines; and evils are started which it took years of agitation and the touching appeal of our greatest poetess to set right. The skilled journeymen found themselves thrown out, the small "domestic" masters supported them in their resistance, and what may with sundry limitations be described as the first modern Trade Union was formed at Halifax under the name of the "Institution."

[1] Page 80. [2] Page 73.

And as these associations increase and prosper, they are met with a long series of the so-called "Combination Laws," of which the last (39 & 40, *Geo. III, c.* 106) was the greatest and the most thoroughgoing. All agreements between journeymen and workmen for obtaining advance of wages were declared illegal conspiracies, with a penalty of two months' imprisonment thereto attached. But in 1824 the Combination Laws fell. It is true that in 1825 the immunity which the law of 1824 had given to the workers was limited, and only those who actually attended the workers' meeting to decide on the acceptance or refusal of a proffered wage were allowed to partake in the bargain; and all agreements to affect the wages of persons *not* present at the meeting were to be treated as conspiracies. Under this law six Dorchester labourers were transported for seven years, ostensibly for administering unlawful oaths. And though after a great agitation the men were pardoned, some of them were never found, and thus never heard of their better fortune, or of their possible restoration. But finally the *Trades Union Act of* 1871 legalized their position fully, and in 1875 all penal labour legislation was finally abolished.

Once again, in 1900–06, the position of the Trade Unions was to be fought out, owing to the results of the decision of the House of Lords in the celebrated "Taff Vale Railway case." In 1900 the employés of the Taff Vale Railway struck, and, the men adopting certain methods of conducting the strike, the Company brought an action in the Chancery Court against the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, for an injunction to restrain

the practices complained of. The answering plea was that the Society could not be sued in its corporate capacity. Mr. Justice Farwell decided against the Society; his decision was reversed in the Court of Appeal, but was finally upheld in the House of Lords, in July 1901. This decision making it possible to sue the Union, the Taff Vale Company at once sued for £20,000, and obtained a verdict.

So the question had to be again taken up in Parliament. A motion in the Commons was defeated in 1902. In 1903, 1904, and 1905, Bills to defend the Unions, in their corporate capacity, against legal action were defeated. In January 1906 a Royal Commission was appointed, and in the same year a general election took place, resulting in a change of ministry. In the new Parliament the Government and the Labour Members both introduced Bills, and the Government left the House free to choose which they pleased. Finally, the Government Bill was so amended as to conform to the Labour Bill; and was so passed in December 1906, and came into force on January 1, 1907. The law now stands as it was supposed, before the Taff Vale Case, that it stood then; and we have it that an act done in furtherance of a trade dispute shall not be actionable, in combination, unless it would be actionable without combination; and that no action can lie against the Trade Union in respect of an act alleged to have been committed by or on behalf of the Trade Union. So that redress for illegal acts of Trade Unionists can only be sought at law against the individuals committing those acts, and not against the Union of which they are members.

V

THE RISE OF TEXTILE INDUSTRIES

THE progress which we have hitherto traced has been of slow and gradual growth. But for some industries the advance was more rapid, as soon as certain initial difficulties had been overcome.

We have had many occasions to note how important was the influence exerted upon the early growth of England's industry by the rigid maintenance of the King's Peace by the rulers who succeeded to the throne of the Conqueror. This influence was nowhere more important or most lasting than in respect of the greatest of our textiles, wool.

In a climate such as ours warm clothing is, next to food, the most imperative need of existence. Had we possessed a tropical climate, cotton or linen would probably have taken the place in our history which wool has filled. As it is, wool stands for us in the forefront both in economic importance and historic interest. In the Middle Ages wool was our one important export; and in the latter part of the seventeenth century woollen goods were two-thirds of our total exports. Its influence upon diplomacy may be instanced in the Methuen Treaty of 1702 between England and Portugal, which wholly consisted of the terms upon which the woollens of England were to be exchanged for the wines of Portugal—a treaty whose supporters in-

culcated that "Port is the only wine for a gentleman," and practised what they preached till their descendants have had to bear the gouty penalty. Wool gave us our first industrial Gild—that of the weavers; and in wool the Gild first broke up into the diffused "domestic" form of industry. And in the present day the factory has complete control of it.

These leading characteristics of our wool industry, its age, its vitality, and its mutability, point to its possession of peculiar economic attributes. And such is the fact. In whatever stage of the industry we consider it, we shall find it to be an eminently *marketable* commodity. It is durable, portable without much risk of damage, and highly capable of being sold by sample. And whatever commodity possesses these qualities in a high degree is certain to command the widest market which the times permit.

It must not be forgotten that England prospered as an agricultural country long before she became of any considerable importance in virtue of her manufactures. Hence we quite naturally find that for a long period, lasting until the close of Edward II's reign, our trade in wool consisted chiefly in the export of the raw material, and the import of all the finer kinds of woollen cloth. Cloth of a kind had, it is true, been woven in the homes of the peasantry, under the "Family" system of production. But the well-to-do classes wanted a finer article than any that the peasant looms could then produce, and it was imported accordingly from the Low Countries. Various efforts were made by the

Government to compel the manufacture in England of a finer sort. Edward I appointed an officer, called an Aulnager (Norman-French *aulne*, an ell) to see to the carrying out of the *Assize of Wool*, to regulate its quality and its price. And in 1258 the export of wool was prohibited, and again in 1271, this last enactment also prohibiting the import of woollen cloth. But the difficulty was too fundamental to be dealt with in so simple a fashion. Englishmen did not then possess the skill requisite for the manufacture of those finer qualities of cloth which their customers demanded. Wherefore the prohibition of import had to be withdrawn. Meantime, as the demand for fine cloth increased in England, the demand for English fine wool increased on the Continent, and hence the problem of over-scarce labour, the problem which the Black Death had set to English society, began to find some sort of a solution in the enclosing of lands that had been hitherto subject to the plough, and the substitution of sheep for wheat. This process had indeed begun before the Death, the *Statute of Merton* having been passed as early as 1235. This statute had permitted the lord of the manor to do as he pleased with the "waste," provided he left the tenants "sufficient" pasturage; and of such sufficiency he had been apt to take a narrow view. And now, in the times after the Death, where the enclosed land was "common field" much misery was involved. Often the *entire* village was cleared away, for under a system of communal agriculture it was useless for one or two to try to stay; when all could not remain, all must go.

Yet, hard as this was upon the villagers individually, there were certain compensations from the national point of view. For the enclosed land was more productive than the unenclosed land had been. But the advantage, such as it was, was dearly bought, the dispossessed tenants going to swell the unemployed class, and many of them taking to beggary or outlawry, to the great aggravation of the poverty and distress that were so soon to culminate in a grave danger to the very fabric of society. Though even here the wool itself did something to provide a remedy, and by affording industrial employment to some portion of the dispossessed agriculturalists, the calamity brought with it its own partial cure.

Still England remained unable to produce the finer kinds of woollen cloth. And Edward III determined to do his best to remove this reproach. The remedy was the only one possible in such cases, the one which England has again and again found successful—the importation of foreign skill, and the amalgamation of foreign workmen with the native people. Accordingly Edward invited over skilled workmen from Flanders, promising them protection if they would come to exercise their calling here. Flanders was then in a condition of much unrest; and many came. The earliest of the letters of protection issued to any of these newcomers, so far as we at present know, was issued to one John Kempe in 1331. And it is noticeable that, conspicuous amongst the privileges conferred by such letters of protection, is exemption from the *aulnage*, the ministration of the *aulnager* or wool-

work inspector, alluded to above. The government management of an industry cannot, as a rule, survive the nursery stages of that industry—if further prolonged, it destroys either itself or its charge. Here, Competence no sooner sets its foot within the kingdom, than it claims its birthright —it will take either its liberty or its leave. And Edward had the sense to grant the freedom demanded. And the consequent change in the position of the trade soon showed itself; and from exporting raw wool and importing cloth we began to export cloth, and to restrict, and even at last to prohibit, the export of raw wool.

Not only once or twice did this immigration of foreigners come to our service. That is true of industrial men which is true of sheep dogs—the mixed breeds are the most intelligent and successful. The advantages which England owes to her maintenance of free asylum for men of all races, are incalculable. Again and again, at a crisis of economic change, this foreign element supplied the moral and intellectual fibre needed to knit together and consolidate some hardly-won success. And in opening her harbours to the persecuted of all races England has ever unconsciously practised a selection of the fittest. For it matters not in the least, from the economic standpoint, which side, the persecuting or the persecuted, has in the abstract the better of the question at issue between them. The important thing is that here be opinions, and a class of men and women convinced enough, and brave enough, to leave their all behind, and rather than abjure the said opinions, try their fortunes

anew in distant countries, with their teeming brains and their skilled hands for their chief stock-in-trade. Right or wrong upon the passing issue, these are stronger men, men more richly endowed in intellect and in "the priceless gift of character," than the more compliant conformists whom they leave behind; and it is just these stronger men whom persecution drives away, and whom the land of asylum receives, to profit through countless generations by the admixture of their dauntless blood.

In the fifteenth century great changes were silently going on in the conditions of the woollen industry. The Gilds are breaking up, and the trade is passing into the hands of "clothiers," men with more capital than formerly, and employing numbers of workpeople. The "Domestic" system of industry is now upon us: not developing without conflict. The legislation of the time seems to point to some early signs of even a factory form of industry approaching. The "Weavers Act" of 1555 forbade any clothier dwelling outside a town to keep more than one loom in his house or to let looms out at hire. If this was the case, it is certain that for the time the legislature was strong enough to nip any such tendency in the bud. But though these indications point clearly enough to increase in quantity they do not show any considerable improvement in quality. In the middle of the sixteenth century English cloth was exported unfinished and undyed. But in 1567 the Duke Alva renewed the persecutions in the Netherlands, and the "Reformed" fled in large numbers to England, settling in the Eastern counties, and particularly

in Norwich. Thanks, therefore, to the unconscious kindness of Alva, the problem of quality was solved for us by these men; and England was at last enabled to equal, and ultimately to surpass, anything the Continent could do in fineness of texture and effectiveness of dye.

Once more was England to be dowered with this priceless boon of being allowed to adopt for her own the chosen children of another land. In 1685 Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes, and let loose the horrors of persecution upon the elect of his *bourgeoisie*. Skilled Huguenots poured over to England in great numbers, and this time it was not only wool, but glass, paper, and silk, whose production the strangers improved and brought up to date. Cloth they improved in Yorkshire as well as in the West of England, though Yorkshire's share in these early days was small. Silk they developed, as far as the handloom could carry it, in the East End of London, where the admixture of their French accent was to result in that East End dialect now all but dead and gone—the dialect in which Mr. Weller entreated the judge to "put it down a we, my lord"—and whose loss is to make the humour of *Pickwick*, so irresistible to the last generation, so incomprehensible to the next. For more than a century men of their indomitable race struggled on against, sad to tell, the ignorant opposition of the mass of English workers. Something of the nature of this opposition can be pictured by those who read Charlotte Brontë's novel, *Shirley*. As the great inventions came the men of their race were to the fore in their adoption

and improvement. The spinning-jenny, the water-frame, and the mule have now come to the factory. Driven at first by the running stream, the greatest change of all is to come when Watt watches the kettle-lid with open eyes and a brain behind them, and when the steam-engine, invented in 1769, in 1785 first enters the factory. The water-wheels are now to go to ruin by the side of the streams which had turned them, and industry passes from cold water to hot. The day of the factory with its steam-driven power-loom has arrived, and with it the aggregation of the workers in factory towns, perched over the coal-fields whence the power is derived.

It is a capitalistic and factory era. What is to come next? The present is the result of the vast industrial and commercial changes which, prepared and evolved through two preceding centuries, found expression in the great "Industrial Revolution" which extends over a period of about three-score years and ten, from 1760–1830. An enormous growth of population as a whole, coincident with a decline in the agricultural proportion of it, and a great shifting northwards of its centre of density, marked the fundamental change in the habits of a people no longer prevailingly agricultural. In agriculture itself changes have at last arrived, largely due, as Adam Smith pointed out, to the keener inventiveness of the town intelligence overflowing into the country. Rotation of crops is being developed, and the wooden plough is replaced by steel. The "navigable cut or canal" of Adam Smith passes into insignificance as a means of con-

veyance by comparison with the newly-invented railway (1830). And even the distribution of wealth is altered, rents and prices rising, and the wages of the agricultural labourer falling fast enough to add to the motive force by which he is driven into the towns. In our literature the changes are reflected in Goldsmith's *Deserted Village;* while the evils of an early, undeveloped, and unregulated factory system found expression in the *Hard Times* of Charles Dickens and in the appeal on behalf of the factory children made by Mrs. Browning and answered in the Factory Acts.

In all this we see the supremacy of sun-force, the power stored in coal. But is this the last word of science and of skill? Whilst coal is the main source of power for industrial production, the "factory towns" must be planted above the coal-fields, and industry must be made sombre with the blackness of coal smoke, and grimy with the grime of its dust. But there are other forces in Nature awaiting man's appropriation, and the future, so far as we can plausibly foretell, lies with industrial electricity.

And when once the problem is fully solved, when once Power shall be conveyed by wire, or possibly even by wireless induction, from any source to any application, then the Factory Town is doomed. And when our productive centres are no longer squalid with dirt, when the mill is planted on the hillside, when the web is woven and the tracery designed where light is bright and Nature beautiful, then beneath the touch of unsoiled hands a fairer fabric may issue from our looms than has

ever yet delighted the daughters of men. Then shall pride in the results of toil—toil's best reward—be once more the portion of the worker; then shall cleanliness of work beget cleanliness of home, and therewith cleanliness of life, of speech, and of thought, wherein is the perfection of man's manliness. And production, taking on somewhat of the true creative character, may again hold out to the craftsman some share in the Godlike privilege of gazing on the work of his own hands, and seeing that it is good.

It is a noble vision, one whose realization would be worth its price, in thought and labour. And it is not impossible, nor even incredible. For it is only prejudice or ignorance that has described economics as the dismal science.

VI

THE GREAT DEATH AND ITS RESULTS

So far we have spoken of the industrial progress of England as if it had been continuous and uninterrupted. But to leave such an impression of our economic history uncorrected, would be to provide but a poor insight into the true nature of the facts. And we now proceed to take a glance at the greatest calamity which ever befel our country, a calamity so acute in its intensity, and so wide-spread in its devastation, that it is hardly an exaggeration to describe it as fixing, for quite a large group of questions that have been prominent throughout our modern history and which have not lost their prominence even to the present day, the "fountain date" of our economic history.

The calamity in question is known as the "Black Death" of 1348–9. The name is not a contemporary one, the writers of the time usually alluding to it as *Magna mortalitas*, or simply *Pestis*. For full details of the occurrence itself the student should consult the learned *History of Epidemics in Britain*, by Dr. Charles Creighton, to which work the present writer is in this respect chiefly indebted. The economic consequences are admirably treated in the *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, by the late Prof. Thorold Rogers.

Up to the date of this Great Plague England had been peacefully developing under the fostering influence of the good order preserved by her rulers. Farming had, on the whole, with the exception of a few notably bad years, been prosperous, its profits being estimated at 18 per cent. There were, it is true, certain exceptions to the general rule of prosperity and contentment. The English longbow wielded by a professional soldiery had won both renown and power from the less well-armed and less experienced forces of the Continent. But the wars to which this tempted us were expensive, and the consequent taxation, though not really excessive in amount, was clumsy in the method of its exaction, and much resented by the people. The serfs had for the most part been manumitted by about the end of the thirteenth century, and the discussion of theological questions had begun, under the direction of Wyclif, with a freedom of challenge which augured ill for the enforcement of unpopular measures. But nothing could prevent the English climate from being fickle; and in those days of "national independence," when we were *not* "dependent on the foreigner for food," the fickleness meant disaster to a people who, when they could not reap, could not eat. Hence the famine of 1316, when corn rose to three times its then average price, with considerable consequent loss of life. The diminution of the supply of labour caused wages to rise, and much friction ensued between employers and employed. Numerous servants were dismissed, and of these a portion became outlaws. But the country recovered, and, from 1319 to 1348

it had on the whole been prosperous, when the pestilence struck it.

The disease known as Black Death was of a nature which admits of no doubt. It was the true Plague, the same disease as that which in 1665 broke out again, though to a much smaller extent as compared with the increased population, having indeed smouldered throughout the interval, with numerous more or less serious recrudescences. But on this occasion it assailed the English with all the fury with which the greater infections are accustomed to attack a fresh people at a first onset. It seems to have started from China, where a terrible series of floods and earthquakes had poisoned earth, air, and water with the corruption of the unburied dead. The track of its journey westward is now fairly well known. There existed at the time a considerable caravan trade between China and the West, the route of which lay between the 40th and 48th parallel of latitude. Two great rivers of South Russia, the Don and the Volga, discharge themselves respectively into the Sea of Azof and the Caspian Sea. To navigate these rivers upwards from their mouths would be to travel for about the first 250 miles in a north-easterly direction in the case of the Don and towards the north-west in the case of the Volga. So that at one point in their course these two rivers approach each other somewhat closely. And near the points where this approach is closest there stood at this time on the Volga a city of considerable commerce, called Sarai; whilst Tana, at the mouth of the Don, occupied the site of the modern town

of Azov. In both of them numbers of enterprising Italian merchants had settled, trafficking in the goods the caravans brought, and forwarding them, through the Italian merchant cities, to their various European destinations. But the Tartar hordes laid siege to Tana, and the merchants there retreated to Caffa, a fortified post on the south-east coast of the Crimea, where a town of that name still stands. This post the Genoese had founded some time previously, and thither the Sea of Azof probably afforded them a comparatively safe and easy means of retreat from Tana, carrying their goods with them. Here in Caffa they again stood a siege, lasting for three years, and here the plague broke out with great virulence, attacking both besiegers and besieged. It is open to question whether the goods brought from Tana had conveyed with them the seeds of the infection, or whether the condition of the besiegers' camp outside the walls offered a favourable soil for the invasion of the plague from without. However that may be, it seems certain that when, after enduring a siege of three years, a number of the Italian merchants within the city escaped in a ship to Genoa, they carried the plague with them. And though there were no cases on board of the fugitive ship, yet within a couple of days of her arrival there were deaths in every part of the city (1347). The spark was thus fairly applied to the inflammable material, and the infection spread north and east and west with vast rapidity. In the beginning of August, 1348, it landed at Weymouth; by the 15th of that month it was in Bristol. Thence by way of Gloucester

and Oxford, it travelled up to London, which it reached on November 1.

The pestilence raged through England like a fire, spreading desolation and despair throughout the land. Bad as we know it to have been, we can hardly tell the worst of it, for but few of those who knew it at close quarters had time to record their knowledge. The monastic chronicles for 1349 are mostly blank, or consist but of the two words "*Magna mortalitas*." The clergy seem to have suffered the worst, probably falling a sacrifice to their own devotion in ministering to the dying; and the monasteries worst of all. When the plague reached Ireland, one monastic writer, John Clyn, of the convent of Kilkenny, wrote but a few lines about it, but those are of terrible significance. Speaking of himself as "*inter mortuos mortem expectans*"—"waiting for death amongst the dead"—he concludes, "I leave parchment for continuing the work if haply any man survive and any of Adam's race escape this pestilence." And then is written, "*Videtur quod author hic obiit*"—"at this point it seems that the author died"; and the rest is in another hand.[1] This is not the place to enter upon the discussion of the difficulties and probabilities of the various estimates of the total mortality; suffice it to say that about half the entire population of the England at that time was swept away. No age was safe, no rank was immune, for the habits and homes of the people of all classes were then indescribably filthy; but the common folk suffered most. One of King Edward's daughters,

[1] Dr. Creighton, op. cit. vol. i. p. 115.

and three Archbishops of Canterbury [1] were carried off in the first year. But even in that early day, sanitary measures seem to have found their reward; and Christ Church, Canterbury, we are told, felt the plague but lightly, for the prior had laid on pure water from the hills to the monastery a century before.[2]

Such are the facts, in briefest possible outline, of a cause whose effects were to influence and largely change the subsequent course of our economic history. For so enormous a diminution in the supply of labour could not fail to raise its price; and as a fact, wages immediately after the Death rose to something like double what they had been in 1347. And then arose that struggle between economic law and statutory enactment whose beginning and whose end were alike inevitable. For Statute and Law, like the Earthen and the Brazen Jars of Æsop's fable, can float side by side down the stream of time in safety so long as they do not collide; but the first shock of contact is fatal to the weaker vessel. So when the Plague had reduced the supply of labour its price in wages rose—under economic law. And when the King issued a Proclamation directing that no higher wage should be paid than that customary before the Death, the mandate came to nothing, for the farmers had either to pay the higher wages or leave their crops ungarnered. When Parliament could again venture to meet, the Proclamation was embodied in a statute, the *First Statute of Labourers*,

[1] Thorold Rogers, *Six Centuries*, p. 221.
[2] *Ibid.*

1350, enacting penalties against all who either gave or accepted more than the old rate of wages. But the frequency with which this Act was re-enacted with variants of many kinds, shows how great was its failure. "It was no marvel that Parliament constantly complained that the Statute of Labourers was not kept. The marvel is that they did not see that it could not possibly be kept."[1] Here, then, is a fact of the very first political and economic importance: The people, with economic Law on their side, are struggling with their rulers armed with a statute. The statute fails; and in and by the failure the people learn their strength.

But in those days of slow and tedious methods of communication it took some time for a political cause to "develop energy." The friction had to be prolonged before the spark was ultimately kindled. Yet the friction did not cease, and the blaze was sure to come. The clumsy methods of taxation continued in evidence, supplying just the kind of constantly repeated irritation, whose effects were likely to be cumulative. The storm broke at last in 1381, in the great Peasants' Revolt, under the leadership of Wat Tyler.

Once again, and always, it is necessary to emphasize the distinction between an occasion and a cause in history. There are some who think that the great Indian Mutiny of 1857 was "caused" by the issue of certain cartridges, alleged to have been greased with beef or pork fat, to the Hindu and Muhammadan soldiery. These simple minds neg-

[1] Thorold Rogers, *Six Centuries*, p. 230.

lect the entire history of India from the battle of Plassy to the Mutiny itself, with its old-standing prophecies, its deposed princes, its seething discontent. Similarly, the tale of insult offered to Tyler's daughter in respect of the Poll-Tax, and the vengeance of her father, are still sometimes spoken of as the "cause" of the Wat Tyler revolt. Nothing could be further from the truth. The poll-tax of Tyler's time was the third in chronological order of imposition, and the other two had been paid without any special manifestation of hostility. The poll-tax incident was but the spark which fired a train already elaborately laid. And in this process of storing explosive matter, Wyclif's "poor priests" had been the chief agents. The struggle was an economic one, the clash of two opposing economic tendencies. As two rivers may start from a common watershed and flow in opposite directions, so from the common cause in the Black Death these opposing forces took their rise. On the one hand the nobles, moved by the rise in the price of labour, naturally turned their thoughts back to the times of the old "week work" and "boon days," when their serfs rendered them labour as their right, a right too lightly bartered away in the careless prosperous times before the Death, for an easy money commutation. Hence an endeavour to restore the old labour tenure. But the day was gone by. Opposed to them on the other side were a people to whom the message of a religious socialism was being brought with all its wealth of moving force by the "poor priests" of Wyclif's new dispensation. Of these new

preachers such a man as John Ball was at once a leader and a type. Wandering over the land, addressing the people on bleak hillside or under sheltering oak, they told the tale, ever as full of attraction as it is void of foundation, of a primæval equality of all mankind, and of a people all alike happy in the simplicity of their toil and the plenitude of its reward. And the people being thus incited to energy of resistance, they were further bidden to hold themselves in readiness for the call which should summon them to the resumption of their birthright. For the dissemination of such teachings Ball himself was taken and imprisoned in Maidstone gaol. But there was no lack of others to carry on the fiery cross; and when Tyler struck the spark the stored forces were all ready, and the whole country was in a blaze. Three great characteristics of this rising show how formidable it was. In the first place it was very general all over the country. The men of Kent had long been quit of serf tenure, yet they took a leading part in the revolt, thus showing that the people were widely possessed of an ideal which led them to make common cause of special grievances. Secondly, the rising was very nearly successful. Granted that for the time being it was a failure; yet never before or since in our history have the powers of order received so bold a defiance, enforced by so shrewd a shock of physical violence.

It is not necessary to accept every detail as set out by the chroniclers in order to believe that the young King behaved with a courage and discretion beyond his years. But the very detail with which

the story is told bears witness to the anxiety inflicted upon London during the terrible June nights while the city was in possession of the insurgents, with John Ball, who had been liberated from Maidstone gaol, to urge them on with his untutored eloquence. And lastly, unlike most popular risings, it was a cause of a real amelioration in the condition of the people. The landlord class was furious and vowed all sorts of vengeance, but the custom of commuting labour rents became universal; and only the Lollards suffered for the liberties which others had won.

Hence two data, as it were, to form the starting points of political and economic reasoning in the minds of the succeeding generations of the people. At the close of the fourteenth century they found themselves prosperous. And that prosperity was all the dearer to them in that they regarded it as having been won by making themselves feared. Here was every requisite for a renewal of a grave danger to the social order.

For the prosperity was not long-lived. In the latter part of the fifteenth century it had already begun to decline, and throughout the sixteenth century the poverty and the consequent discontent of the people constituted an ever-increasing menace to the established order of society. The causes were various and operative not all at the same time. But, unhappily, any cause making for poverty in the mass of the people is usually cumulative in its results. The discoveries of the precious metals in America were lowering the value of silver, or, what is the same thing under another name, were caus-

ing a general rise of prices. But the law to be observed as operative in changes of price is that during the period of transition, whether the change in prices be one of rise or of fall, it is the finished article which changes first, the raw material next, and services last. Hence, unless there be some fairly potent counteracting cause at work, a period of rising prices is apt to be one of hardship for the wage-earner. The things he has to buy have risen in price before the wages he earns—the money wages—have actually increased. From which it of course follows that real wages—the labourer's command of the conveniences and necessaries of life—will be diminished by the rise of prices, for as long as the transitional state lasts.

Another cause of the decline in the prosperity of the labouring class was the coincidence of a rising price of wheat and a rapidly increasing population. Whilst the price of wheat trebled, the wages rose by only about twenty per cent. In 1495 the price of wheat was 4*s*. 0¾*d*. per quarter, at which time the artizan in the country was earning 3*s*. a week, and the husbandman 2*s*. a week. In 1593 the corresponding labourers earn 4*s*. and 2*s*. 6*d*.; while the price of wheat is 18*s*. 4½*d*. So that "the work of a whole year would not supply the labourer with the quantity which in 1495 the labourer earned with fifteen weeks' labour." [1]

Again, the issue of base money, the great economic sin of the earlier Tudors, which Elizabeth strove with some success to undo, was producing its inevitable ill results. An honest money is ever

[1] Rogers, *Six Centuries*, p. 391.

more essentially the interest, and even the necessary, of the poor than of the rich. The wealthy man has ready to his hand a hundred ways in which to nullify the evil tendencies of a debased money —ways which are not open to the poor. Hence when the currency is debased, the nominal prices of things rise faster than the nominal price of labour.

A last cause of the growing manifestation of poverty during the last quarter of the sixteenth century, was one to which undue prominence has often been given, but which was nevertheless very real. This was the suppression of the monasteries. These great agencies for the distribution of indiscriminate charity had long acted as a kind of social buffer between society on the one hand, and the sort of poverty that may become desperate and dangerous on the other. And when these were removed the wealthier classes were left face to face with want —want of a sort that might at any moment turn violent.

Here, then, were all the elements of a real danger to law and order. A people who had known prosperity and enjoyed it, attributed it to the uprising of their ancestors under Tyler and Ball. The prosperity is slipping away from them. Old men amongst them are reminding them of the doings of their forefathers, when the Government was scared into the concessions on which that prosperity had been founded. What wonder that they were becoming dangerous, or that a far-seeing Government determined that something must be done to avert the danger?

Energetic efforts were made to develop private charity to an extent sufficient to cope with the crisis. As early as 1547 the curate of each church was enjoined to appeal to his parishioners on behalf of "unfeigned misery," in an exhortation which piety ordained was to be godly, and mercy directed to be short. In 1549 collectors were appointed to inquire, at the church door after service, how much each man would give weekly, and then to distribute the amount without favour, so that the most impotent should get the most. But all these palliatives failed of their purpose, and hence in 1601 we arrive at the first *Poor Law* in the sense of the term in which it has remained with us ever since. From that day to this the population of England has remained divided into two great classes: paupers, and those who support paupers.

Let it not be supposed that the enactment of this law was a result, or even a sign, of a considerable softening in the feelings of the ruling class towards the poor of the land. On the contrary, it was a concession to a felt danger, one of which harshness had failed to dispose. By a statute, 14 *Eliz. c.* 5, "Lusty and valliant beggars" were to be "grievously whipped and burned through the gristle of the right ear with an iron of the compass of an inch about, manifesting his or her rogueish life, and his or her punishment for the same." If stern measures of repression could have solved the problem, it would have been solved that way. But that way was no longer possible, and the statute 43 *Eliz. c.* 3 admitted the legal claim to live.

In its inception and method the statute was a

wise one. It aimed at the three great principles of Relief, Repression, and Remedy. Relief for the really impotent poor who could not help themselves. Repression for the "lusty and valliant" vagabond. And Remedy to be applied to that end of life wherein alone its destinies are capable of amelioration, by the education of the children and the apprenticeship of the rising generation.

The remaining story of our poor-law constitutes a considerable history by itself. Unfortunately the wise methods of the Elizabethan Act were soon obscured or forgotten, and the methods adopted for the State relief of poverty went steadily from bad to worse, until the revelations of the Commissioners of 1834 brought about the enactment of the New Poor Law of 1835.

Thus from 1348 to 1835, a period of nearly five hundred years, the chain of cause and effect has linked the facts of modern economic life with a starting-point in the Great Death. One episode in the story deserves special mention—the *Law of Parochial Settlement*.

When Elizabeth's Act threw upon the several parishes the burden of maintaining the indigent poor resident therein, it was at once manifest that a parish without resident poor would be free from poor-rate. Complete parishes were therefore purchased as estates; the poor were given notice to quit, and went to live in the surrounding parishes, from whose rates they derived parish relief in times of stress. To remedy the resulting confusion a somewhat extraordinary measure was adopted in the *Law of Parochial Settlement*, 1662. By this

enactment a man obtained a "settlement" in a parish if he lived there for forty days, and the "settled" parishioner could claim relief out of the parish rates. But before a newcomer to any parish had resided there for forty days, a parishioner could go before a magistrate and make oath that this newcomer might at some future time come upon the rates. And the oath having been made, the new arrival was sent back to the parish whence he came. Numerous modifications were introduced at intervals into the law; but in its more essential features it remained in force until 1795, when it was subjected to drastic alteration; the power to remit to the parish of origin being abolished in all cases where actual application for parish relief had not been made. But as Prof. Fawcett pointed out, the mischief had been done in that we had for more than a century taught the agricultural labourer that it was almost a crime to make any effort to leave the parish of his birth. And to this cause we may attribute much of the stagnation of agricultural labour in the land, with its consequent local diversities of wages. Adam Smith roundly denounced the law, and Prof. Fawcett said of it that probably no law of any land ever pressed more hardly on the poor of that land. The law of course fell, but its legal and formal repeal was preceded by its practical abolition under the pressure of economic forces. When the Industrial Revolution had come, and when the factory began to call aloud for hands, the old prejudice against the man from a distance had to die away. Hands were wanted, whether they had ever been apprenticed or not, and

the *Statute of Apprentices* became a thing of the past. Hands were welcome, come they whence they would, and the feelings to which the Law of Parochial Settlement had given birth began rapidly to fade away. So that to-day the strength and persistence of those feelings may be regarded as a sort of measure of what may be called the rusticity of a British district. When we find, as we still sometimes may, a district or a village whose inhabitants regard a ten-miles' journey as a serious undertaking, and "Lunnon" as a *terra incognita*, full of vague and terrible possibilities, we know that in that place events have marched past upon the other side, and have left the spirit of mediævalism unchanged.

We have thus traced one of the great sequences of cause and effect to its origin in the Black Death of 1348–9. It may be well to point out that the belief entertained by the masses of the people—the belief which made them dangerous at the close of the sixteenth century—namely, that their vanishing prosperity had been originally won, and might be restored, by their own violence under such leadership as that of Tyler and Ball, was largely an historical error. The Peasants' Revolt was not in itself a success. But it would be a fatal mistake in statecraft to suppose that it is only true beliefs that can stir a people to formidable action; and Elizabeth was not the woman to make such a mistake.

Other results of the same cause can be only briefly indicated. The great expense of hiring labour at the raised wages after the Death did much to set the landlords seeking for a way in which they might

derive profit from their land consistently with a smaller outlay upon labour. The way was found in sheep-farming. And the great increase of sheep-farming brought about a great extension of the enclosure of land. Before the Great Death, England had hardly a hedge. But the enclosures once started went on rapidly, and the rights of the Commoners passed away. The preservation of a few open spaces in or near towns—the rescuing of a few scattered remnants of what was once the people's heritage—is now a matter at once of the greatest difficulty and of the highest importance.

Again, the landlords were glad to be quit by any means of the burden of finding labour for their land, and the system came into vogue of letting it to tenant farmers. These were the "stock-and-land leases," which were the forerunners of the modern English system of land-tenure.

Here, then, we may pause to see what *general* truths can be elicited from even a summary sketch of the facts of our economic history. The steady growth of cause and effect is the most prominent and far-reaching of these truths. In the strict sense of the word very little "happens" to a people. To-day is the product of yesterday, and in its turn will certainly mould the character of to-morrow. And again, we find how organization must follow and cannot force the industrial development, and how a people will advance fastest and farthest when it is most plastic in accommodating itself to changes in the economic conditions. Hospitality towards new ideas and stranger peoples is a

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